



Salamander Saturday: Salamander Crossing Sign

In this activity, you will learn about the spotted salamander and what you can do to help this amphibian species.

Age: Families with children 8 years old or under

Gather your Gear

- Paper (printer paper/cardstock/poster board and construction paper)
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils
- Scissors
- Googly eyes (optional)

Get Ready *You can help your child make connections by thinking about concepts before the activity.*

The spotted salamander is an **amphibian** (cold-blooded vertebrate animal) that lives in forests (near rivers and streams) throughout much of the eastern United States and Canada. Though they are brightly colored (blue-ish black with yellow or orange spots) and measure about seven inches long, the spotted salamander is actually quite hard to find! They are only active at night and are really good at hiding under logs, rocks, and leaf debris in the forest.

Every year, sometime late winter/early spring, salamanders come out from their underground winter hiding spots to **migrate** (relocate) to temporary isolated pools of water called **vernal pools**. These pools, which are filled with spring rain, rising ground water, melting snow, and runoff, provide an important breeding habitat to salamanders. Sadly, there are many roads that cross the paths salamanders take to get from their hiding spots to the vernal pools, causing a devastating decrease in their population.

Explore/Read/Do the Activity

- Salamanders need help crossing the road. Let's make a road crossing sign for them!
- Get out some paper (any size will do)
- Using markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils - create a sign with phrases such as "Watch Out! Salamanders Crossing" or "Salamander Crossing" or "Caution: Salamander Crossing". Make sure the words are big enough to read.
- Draw a salamander to go on the sign as well, and whatever else you'd like to add. Get creative!
- You may not live near a road that a salamander would cross, but you can still put up your crossing sign in your home or backyard to show that you've learned about spotted salamanders!
- Bonus activity: Salamander Paper Creation
 - Get some colorful paper (preferably construction paper)
 - With pencil, draw an outline of a salamander on one piece of paper (spotted salamanders are bluish-black, but you can make your salamander any color you'd like!).
 - You can make the salamander 7 inches (its normal size) or almost as big as the piece of construction paper (recommended).
 - Cut out your salamander.
 - With another color paper (spotted salamanders have yellow or orange spots, but, again, you can pick whichever color you'd like), cut out small circles.
 - Glue the circles (spots) onto your already cut out salamander.
 - For eyes, you can glue on some googly eyes (or just draw some on if you don't have any).
 - Carefully, fold your salamander down the middle (from head to tail), so that it doesn't lay flat.
 - Now you have your very own salamander!

Recap *Have a conversation about what you saw/did and questions your child may have.*

- What type of animal is a spotted salamander?
- Where can you find spotted salamanders? What does their habitat look like?
- What danger do salamanders face when they migrate?
- How can you help salamanders?

Relate *Create connections to the idea through activities*

Have you ever had to cross the road? It can be dangerous, which is why there are traffic signals, crossing signals, and crossing guards to help people cross roads to get to where they need to go. Salamanders need to cross roads too, but they unfortunately don't have the same help that us humans do. This is where you can help. If you live on the east coast near a road near a forest, you may live near a salamander habitat. Create salamander crossing signs to post by roads salamanders may cross and spread the word about salamanders so that your friends and neighbors can also be aware and careful drivers on those wet, late winter/early spring nights when salamanders cross the road.

It takes a team.... join ours

Help us save species by joining the "Zoo Conservation Corps" and raise awareness about wild animals, their habitats and why conserving both is so important. Post your pictures and poems on your social to share with your family and friends what you have learned, use the hashtag #onlyZooATL so that we can see all your great work!

Want to know more?

- For more about Salamander Saturday, go to: <https://www.fcsal.org/salamander-saturday>
- For more about salamander migration and how to help, go to: <https://vt.audubon.org/news/why-did-salamander-cross-road-and-how-you-can-help>
- Read *The Salamander Room* by Anne Mazer.
- Read *Salamander Sky* by Katy Farber. It is about a young girl who awaits the night she can help salamanders cross the road near her house. It's also something the author does herself each year! If you don't have access to the book, Katy Farber herself released a video of her reading the book. Check it out at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=203an4Tz14I>
- Go on a night hike with your family on a wet, spring night to see if you can spot some spotted salamanders and maybe even help them cross the road!

Salamander Paper Creation example:



Examples of Actual Salamander Crossing signs:



